



## Common Core State Standards Initiative

### Montana Common Core Standards

#### Frequently Asked Questions

Updated September 23, 2011

1. What are Educational Standards?

Educational standards define what a student should know, understand and be able to do. They are academic in focus, rigorous but attainable, readily understood and designed to measure the progress of students toward meeting them.

2. Why **do** we need common educational standards?

Standards ensure that all students, from school to school and state to state, are prepared for success in college and are career ready. Standards do not tell teachers how to teach, but they do help teachers address the knowledge and skills their students need. Standards also help students and parents by setting clear and realistic goals for success. Standards are key building blocks in providing our young people with a high-quality education.

3. What was the Common Core State Standards development initiative? Who developed the standards?

The Common Core State Standards Initiative (<http://www.corestandards.org>) was led by the [National Governor's Association \(NGA\)](#) and the [Council of Chief State School Officers \(CCSSO\)](#), working with [Achieve](#), [ACT](#) and the [College Board](#), among other education groups. In September 2009, CCSSO and NGA distributed for review the College and Career-readiness Standards intended to define the knowledge and skills students need to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses and work training programs. These standards provided the foundation for the K-12 Common Core State Standards.

Since December 2009, the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) reviewed several drafts of mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) standards and provided critical comments to the CCSSO and the NGA. The K-12 Common Core State Standards for Mathematics and K- 12 Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies and Science were released June 2, 2010.

4. Are the Common Core State Standards curriculum?

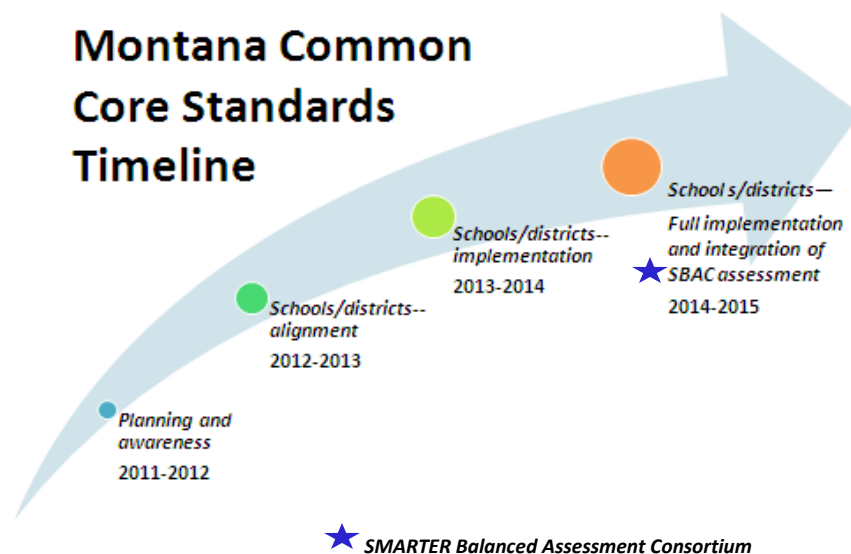
No. It is the responsibility of the local school district to develop curriculum aligned to the Montana Content Standards. If the proposed Common Core State Standards are adopted by the Montana Board of Public Education, they will be the Montana Common Core Standards (MCCS) for Mathematics and English Language Arts, replacing the current Mathematics and Communication Arts Content Standards. Districts align their local curriculum to the standards as required under the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 10.55.603.

5. Are states required to adopt the Common Core State Standards?

No. Adoption of the Common Core State Standards is a voluntary action by each state.

6. Is there a timeline for the potential adoption of the Montana Common Core Standards?

Denise Juneau, Superintendent of Public Instruction, made a recommendation to the Montana Board of Public Education (BPE) in May 2011 to adopt the Common Core State Standards with additional content for Indian Education. The BPE is authorized by the Montana Constitution to adopt Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) for the accreditation of public schools in our state. The BPE takes action on the recommendation to adopt in November 2011.



7. What happens to the considerable efforts of Montana educators to develop the current standards if the Common Core State Standards are adopted?

The Montana content standards provide the necessary basis to compare and determine gaps and overlapping content in the Montana Common Core Standards. The thoughtful and hard work that Montana educators have contributed to the process of the development of Montana Content Standards will continue to inform the decision making process as the Montana Common Core Standards are implemented.

8. Were Montana educators involved in the review of the Common Core State Standards?

Yes, Montana educators have participated in the review. Teams of educators reviewed the proposed standards to determine the alignment of the Common Core State Standards with the Montana Content and Performance Standards. This information is available on the OPI Web page: [http://www.opi.mt.gov/Curriculum/Index.html?gpm=1\\_7](http://www.opi.mt.gov/Curriculum/Index.html?gpm=1_7)

9. Are there future plans for developing Common Core Standards in other content areas?

The development of Common Core State Standards in Social Studies is being facilitated by the Council of Chief State School Officers. In addition, conceptual frameworks for Science are being developed by the National Research Council and ACHIEVE.

10. How will the Montana Common Core Standards be assessed?

Montana has joined in the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) of states for this purpose. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has awarded \$350 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 for the development of new assessments to measure the Common Core State Standards.

The purpose of the consortium is to:

- Develop a set of comprehensive and innovative assessments for grades 3-8 and high school in English language arts and mathematics aligned to the Common Core State Standards; and
- Ensure that all students leave high school prepared for postsecondary success in college or a career through increased student learning and improved teaching.

The assessments will be operational across consortium states in the 2014-15 school year.

11. What will the Montana Common Core Standards mean for students?

The standards will provide more clarity about, and consistency in, what is expected of student learning across the country. Currently, every state has its own set of academic standards, meaning public education students at the same grade level in each state may be expected to achieve to different levels. This initiative will allow states to share information effectively and help provide all students with an equal opportunity for an education that will prepare them to go to college or enter the workforce, regardless of where they live. Common standards will not prevent different levels of achievement among students, but they will ensure more consistent exposure to materials and learning experiences through curriculum, instruction, and teacher preparation among other supports for student learning. In a global economy, students must be prepared to compete with not only their American peers in the next state, but with students from around the world. The standards will help prepare students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and careers.

12. What is the role of the federal government in the implementation of the Common Core Standards?

The federal government has had no role in the development of the Common Core State Standards.

However, the federal government will have the opportunity to support states as they begin adopting the standards. For example, the federal government can:

- Support this effort through a range of tiered incentives, such as providing states with greater flexibility in the use of existing federal funds, supporting a revised state accountability structure, and offering financial support for states to implement the standards.
- Provide long-term financial support for the development and implementation of common assessments, teacher and principal professional development, and research to help continually improve the Common Core State Standards over time.
- Revise and align existing federal education laws with the lessons learned from the best of what works in other nations and from research.

When adopted, the OPI will provide a variety of professional development opportunities as well as support resources to assist districts to realign local curriculum to the Common Core State Standards.

13. What does this work mean for students with disabilities and English language learners?

Common standards will provide a greater opportunity for states to share experiences and best practices within and across states that can lead to an improved ability to best serve young people with disabilities and English language learners. Additionally, the K-12 English language arts and mathematics standards include information on application of the standards for English language learners and students with disabilities.

14. Will the transition to the proposed Montana Common Core Standards and SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessment system require more statewide testing?

No. The SBAC summative assessment will replace the current required Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT) administered toward the end of the school year. The CRT assesses Reading and Mathematics in grades 3-8 and 10. The SBAC will assess English Language Arts and Mathematics in grades 3-8 and 11.

15. Will the transition to the proposed Montana Common Core Standards require more school or district-wide testing?

No. The SBAC will provide options for classroom, school, and district assessments that can be selected and used locally.

16. What are the assessment options that will be provided by SBAC?

- Formative Assessment/Tools and Practices to use in the learning process,
- Interim Assessments to use after a segment of learning such as a chapter or a unit, and
- Summative Assessment to use toward the end of the school year.